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ABSTRACT

In 1993, the Queensland, Australia, Board of Teacher Registration established a working party to consider the preparation of teachers for working with young adolescents. This report from the working party summarizes the educational needs of young Australian adolescents, the preparation of teachers for working with these students, and the possible need for new programs to prepare these teachers. Part 1 of the report, "Introduction," discusses the developmental and educational needs of early adolescents. Part 2, "The Project: History and Process," summarizes a previous Issues Paper highlighting the special needs of early adolescents, the social context of adolescence in Queensland, the need for innovative educational approaches to enhance learning outcomes, and implications for teacher education; discusses reactions to the Issues Paper; and describes a conference for key representatives of relevant stakeholder groups to develop recommendations concerning preservice and inservice teacher education. Part 3, "Outcomes," presents the vision emerging from the conference and its implications for schools, curriculum, and systems. Part 4, "Recommendations for Teacher Education," outlines recommendations for preservice and inservice programs for teachers of young adolescents. It is recommended that preservice programs be developed to prepare prospective teachers to work with young adolescents and that all preservice programs for primary, secondary, and special school teachers incorporate study of early adolescence. Specific inservice education should be provided for current teachers working with or interested in working with young adolescents, and cooperative professional development opportunities and research and support networks should be available. (Appendices include names of participants in the working party and in a subsequent conference. Contains 11 references.) (KDFB)

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TEACHERS WORKING WITH YOUNG ADOLESCENTS

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TEACHERS WORKING WITH YOUNG ADOLESCENTS

Report of the Working Party on the Preparation of Teachers for the Education of Young Adolescents

Queensland Board of Teacher Registration
Toowong
April 1996

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. Background

The Board of Teacher Registration is responsible for the registration of teachers in Queensland. Its functions include conferring and collaborating with employing authorities, teacher education institutions, the teaching profession, teacher organisations, and the general community in relation to standards of courses of teacher education acceptable for the purpose of teacher registration.

In 1993 the Board of Teacher Registration established a working party to consider the preparation of teachers for working with young adolescents and the possible need for new programs designed to prepare teachers primarily for working with young adolescents.

As its initial task, the Board Working Party undertook a review of the recent literature on issues relating to the developmental needs of young adolescents, and how schools and the community are responding to these needs.

The Working Party then developed an Issues Paper, 'Preparing Teachers for Working with Young Adolescents', which was widely circulated early in 1994 to all relevant interest groups in Queensland and to key interstate bodies in order to canvass opinion on the issues. The 213 responses to the Issues Paper were considered by the Working Party in the second half of 1994.

In the light of the high level of interest demonstrated in proposals put forward in the Issues Paper, the Working Party recommended that a conference be held for key representatives of relevant stakeholder groups. This would further examine the issues associated with the education of young adolescents and ways of addressing identified needs in schools, education systems, and teacher education. The Board of Teacher Registration, jointly with the Department of Education, the Queensland Catholic Education Commission, and the Association of Independent Schools of Queensland, convened a conference called 'Sharing the Future: Preparing Teachers for Working with Young Adolescents', in August 1995. This was a working conference and consisted of input from a range of speakers and several stages of workshop discussion.

This report includes the analysis of the current literature on young adolescent education as set out in the Issues Paper and provides an overview of the other stages of the project.

Following the conference, the Board's Working Party on the Preparation of Teachers for the Education of Young Adolescents was expanded and reconvened. In order to develop outcomes of the project as a whole, the Working Party drew on the Issues Paper and the responses to it; referred to the conference process and outcomes; and drew on the expertise of its members. This report and the recommendations which appear represent the final outcome of the project, which spanned some three years and involved over 250 people.

2. Focus

Much recent literature has emphasised the importance of the 'middle years' of schooling (the upper primary and lower secondary years). These years correspond with the developmental period of early adolescence, or young people aged from around 9 or 10 to approximately 14 or 15 years.

One reason for this focus is that this area of schooling has been relatively neglected in relation to the high priority given to both the early childhood and post-compulsory years. Current secondary teacher education courses inevitably tend to focus on the upper secondary phase of schooling and hence the developmental period of late adolescence or young adulthood. While there are many preservice teacher education courses focusing on early childhood, preschool, primary, secondary, and adult/vocational education, there are few courses designed to prepare teachers specifically for early adolescence.

This document recognises that human development is continuous, and that age-based distinctions in behaviour characteristics are not as dramatic as the notion of stages would suggest. Notwithstanding that the total period of adolescence spans a wide age-range, beginning as early as 9 or 10 years and extending to 17 or 18 years, the characteristics of early adolescence are significantly different from those of late adolescence. The developmental needs of younger adolescents are not unique, but are continuous with the needs of children and late adolescents. However, certain needs and characteristics take on greater importance in early adolescence because of the fundamental changes associated with pubertal development.

What is distinctive about the early adolescent period (ages 9 or 10 to approximately 14 or 15 years) is that it is a period of dramatic personal change. The most obvious changes are physical and physiological, but the changes are not limited to the arena of biology; they extend into the arenas of social, emotional, and intellectual development. The coincidence of pubertal change with changes in schooling marks the early adolescent years as a distinct social age in our culture, with social and

psychological characteristics which merit deliberate and appropriate responses from educators.

Students in the 'middle years' have developmental needs as they adjust to these changes. While not exclusive to this age group, these needs are of particular concern for young adolescents:

- the need for acceptance and belonging
- the need for security
- the need for independence and self-assertion
- the need for recognition and significance
- the need for challenge through new experience
- the need for achievement and mastery.

Needs such as these are manifest in distinctive behaviour characteristics in early adolescence, which signal the individual youngster's moves to more adult ways of thinking and behaving on the one hand, while still displaying immaturity, impulsiveness, excitability and superficiality on the other. The behavioural style of young adolescents is often marked by inconstancy: friendships may change frequently, enthusiasms may flame briefly, interests may not persist for long. Socially they may display restless energy, adoption of extravagant language and styles, sensitivity to criticism, and resistance to advice and external direction. Peers are frequently important sources of social acceptance and establish the criteria by which the individual is accepted or not by the group. Cognitively speaking, early adolescence is a period when young people build skills of arguing and of analysing situations. They tend not to be given to extensive or painstaking analysis, and may forcefully express an opinion without acknowledging that their experience may be limited; while they will vigorously dissect an argument, their thinking may be mixed with literalism and the tendency to jump quickly to conclusions and over-generalise. Thus both socially and cognitively, there are signs of strong internal forces propelling the early adolescent towards self-assertion, and towards removing the restrictions imposed by adult viewpoints and controls.

The social context of today - for example, the breakdown of family units, economic constraints, contradictory social values, the influences of the media, peers, and so on - often militates against meeting the developmental needs of young adolescents. Another reason for this new focus on the middle years, arising from a combination of the above factors, is the increasing spotlight on young adolescents in trouble - ranging from their involvement in drugs and crime to cases of abuse and neglect. Increasingly, the alienation of youth is raised as an issue.

Schools cannot be blamed for the existence of society's problems, nor should schools be expected to offer all the solutions. However, schools must respond to

changing societal demands and pressures, particularly as faced by young adolescents. Currently, organisational processes in place in many schools are not conducive to learning, for example rigid age groupings, and inflexible timetabling. Curriculum may be assessment-driven and lack relevance to the young adolescents' world. Schools, families, and other social agencies must ensure our young people do not become alienated, at risk of failure, and drawn to avenues of escape.

Drawing on strong links with families, communities, and other agencies, schools must change to better meet the needs of young adolescents. The change that is needed is not minor 'tinkering' with organisations and processes already in place such as small-scale changes to timetable or curriculum; there is a need for a new culture - a different approach to schooling for young adolescents.

Such an emphasis on schooling for young adolescents does not necessarily mean alterations to existing structures. Changes might be implemented within the existing structures in upper primary and lower secondary schools, or in some cases new structures could be trialed, such as a middle school within a school, particularly in P-10 or P-12 schools. The changes that are important involve different approaches and a new way of thinking. The Board's Working Party on the Preparation of Teachers for Working with Young Adolescents was guided throughout the project by the conviction that a new vision for the schooling of young adolescents must be developed.

II. THE PROJECT: HISTORY AND PROCESS

1. Background

The first stage of the Board's project involved the preparation of an Issues Paper which drew on national and international literature and current reports in the area of the education of young adolescents. In the next section the Issues Paper is reproduced in full.

Commencing in 1991, the Schools Council of the National Board of Employment, Education and Training (NBEET) undertook a substantial study of the 'compulsory' years of schooling. One of the project reports, *In the Middle: Schooling for Young Adolescents*, and the final report *Five to Fifteen: Reviewing the 'Compulsory' Years of Schooling*, both published in 1993, highlighted the special needs of the early adolescent age group and suggested new directions and innovative approaches designed to enhance learning outcomes for adolescents by matching the middle years of schooling more closely to their particular developmental needs.

The reports suggested that the present focus on stages of schooling - preschool, primary, secondary - should be relinquished in favour of a focus on phases of human development - childhood, adolescence, adulthood. Rather than characterising educational provision by year of schooling, educators should focus on responding to student needs, as characterised by their individual stages of development, irrespective of where the students are located in the schooling system. The reports highlighted the fact that students at various stages of development have particular physical, psychological, social and cognitive needs which must be met if effective learning is to occur.

The final report, *Five to Fifteen* (NBEET, 1993a, p23), recommended that initial teacher education courses provide opportunities for intending teachers to undertake specialised studies in the various phases of childhood and adolescent development as well as in key areas of the curriculum such as literacy, numeracy, science and technology. Similarly, the Queensland Board of Teacher Registration's Issues Paper (1994) sought comment on the suggestion that, rather than focusing on levels of schooling (preschool, primary, secondary), programs might focus on the major developmental stages of *early childhood*, *childhood*, *early adolescence* and *late adolescence/young adulthood*, with programs focusing on any one of these stages providing some understanding of the stages that precede and follow that stage.

Because of the emphasis placed on years 11 and 12 for tertiary entrance and employment selection purposes, current secondary teacher education courses inevitably focus on the upper secondary phase of schooling and hence the

developmental stage of late adolescence or young adulthood. Consequently, the time and attention devoted to preparation for teaching younger adolescents is generally very limited. Secondary teachers are generally expected to be able to teach at least two subjects to years 11 and 12, and career advancement through promotion to subject teacher or head of department generally requires demonstrated expertise in teaching to years 11 and 12. Preservice teacher education programs for secondary teachers are therefore expected to provide significant tertiary studies (such as a university major or sub-major) in two subject areas as well as curriculum and 'teaching methodology' studies in these areas. In addition, considerable time in such preservice courses is devoted to providing a sound introduction to procedures for school-based curriculum development and assessment, and the theoretical bases for this.

Thus, while there are abundant offerings across Australia of preservice teacher education courses focusing on early childhood (preschool, preschool/primary), childhood (primary) and late adolescence (secondary, adult/vocational education), courses designed to prepare teachers more specifically for early adolescence are few and far between. School leavers with a particular interest in teaching young adolescents across a range of subject areas are steered into secondary teacher education courses, and spend most of their time specialising in one or two areas and in the teaching of older adolescents and young adults. If they do not wish to take major studies in specialist areas, their only option is to take a primary teacher education program, where they may study a range of subject areas, but the focus will be on teaching pre-adolescent children. Not only is there a gap in teacher education provision for the young adolescent stage, but potential teachers or beginning teachers with a special interest in this stage may be actively discouraged from pursuing it as they would, in the present context, be severely limiting their career options and prospects for advancement.

What is so special about this stage of human development that leads to the suggestion that teachers should be specially prepared for working with young adolescents? The information which follows is drawn from the 1994 Board of Teacher Registration Issues Paper, *Preparing Teachers for Working with Young Adolescents*.

2. The Issues Paper

Preparing Teachers for Working with Young Adolescents: An Issues Paper

> *For many young people, early adolescence offers opportunities to choose a path towards a productive and fulfilling life. For many others, it represents their last best chance to avoid a diminished future.*
>
> (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1989)

Characteristics of early adolescence

According to the current literature, as reviewed for example by the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (1989), Eyers (1992) and NBEET (1993b), early adolescence is a period of profound physical, intellectual, psychological and social change, characterised by:

- a great diversity in the age of onset and rate of progress of adolescent development: for Australian young people, the normal range of onset of puberty is from 9 to 13 years for girls and from 10 to 14 for boys;
- a rapid spurt in growth accompanied by the dramatic bodily changes of puberty, shaking earlier confidence in the body;
- for some, the emergence of the capacity for abstract thinking, for deductive reasoning, expanding the conceptual range beyond the concrete, operational, here-and-now to hypothetical, future and spatially remote aspects of abstract thought;
- striking out from the dependence of childhood to take on a separate, independent, individual identity and value system;
- the formation and functioning of peer groupings, reflecting the profound importance of acceptance by peers to adolescent social development and self-esteem;
- emerging sexuality;
- new, deep, turbulent, unpredictable, contradictory, sometimes hormone-induced emotions - anxiety, fear, joy, anger, love, jealousy, loneliness.

If they are to have the opportunity to participate in society as informed citizens and to choose pathways towards a productive and fulfilling future, young adolescents need to:

- adjust to the profound physical, social, emotional and intellectual changes of early adolescence;
- develop a sense of their own identity, and of the personal and social values which will become part of their life;
- establish their own sexual identity;
- gain acceptance among peers of the same and the opposite sex;
- grow towards independence while maintaining a network of secure personal relationships;
- establish or maintain relationships with adults who can provide advice and act as role models;
- develop skills in decision-making, and learn to accept responsibility for decisions;
- develop skills in abstract and reflective thinking;
- develop self-confidence;
- become more aware of the social and political world around them and develop skills in coping and interacting with that world.

Many young adolescents are able to negotiate these developmental tasks with relative equanimity. For many others, however, the disruption or loss of a secure home base greatly exacerbates the impact of other social influences, and the need to find other secure adult relationships elsewhere.

The social context for early adolescence

Many aspects of social life in the 1990s pose particular challenges for young adolescents, often making it difficult or impossible for them to meet their developmental needs. Demographic changes including interstate and overseas migration, rapid urbanisation, near-city population growth, and the general mobility of the population create additional disruptions at a time when stability is important. A declining sense of belonging to a community - fewer local community-based youth clubs and activities, declining average church attendances, fears for personal safety and security, and the isolation of the aged - contributes to the marginalisation of young people.

The literature recognises that many young people experience the breakdown or disruption of the family or social unit through separation, divorce, serious illnesses or bereavement and have to adjust to living in single-parent families or reconstituted families and to relationships with multiple parent figures. Other young adolescents suffer domestic violence, sexual abuse, or other forms of physical and

psychological neglect and abuse. Particularly during periods of recession, economic problems may lead to unemployment, retrenchment, poverty, lack of adequate housing, or lack of public transport. Economic or other domestic problems may lead to homelessness for even young adolescent children. Rising school retention rates in recent years have led to an extended period in education and a longer dependence of young people on their families.

Young adolescents today are confronted by contradictory and rapidly changing social values, as reflected in the print media, radio, TV and video games, standards of reporting and advertising, the depiction of pornography and violence and the ubiquitous 'soapies' and situation comedies. Varying parental expectations and different expectations across cultural groups and individual families compound uncertainty. Young people are also susceptible to a range of peer pressures relating to lifestyle and attitudes, as well as gender and cultural forces which tend to divide or alienate young people. Changing sexual mores have an increasing impact with the earlier commencement of sexual activity for increasing numbers of young people, accompanied by concerns about safe sex and HIV/AIDS. Other emerging health issues for adolescents include drug, alcohol and substance abuse, diet, eating disorders, and the prevalence of serious injury, accident deaths and suicide amongst the young.

Factors such as these affect all young adolescents to varying degrees, but may be compounded for specific groups, including Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders, migrants from non-English speaking backgrounds, children and young people who have disabilities or those who are socially or economically disadvantaged.

An indication of the prevalence of serious problems for young adolescents may be gained from the statistics in Table 1, drawn from reports of the Queensland Department of Family Services and Aboriginal and Islander Affairs (1992), and Kids Help Line, Queensland (1993).

Community concern for the well-being of young adolescents is reflected in the range of community and professional groups apart from schools involved in working with young adolescents, and in seeking to overcome their special difficulties. These include many different community youth organisations, many State and Commonwealth Government departments and agencies, and a wide range of voluntary service, crisis counselling and support groups.

Table 1: Some Statistics

Queensland population, 30 June 1992					3,037,400
Population aged 10 to 16 years					319,921
Families with children under 15 years			Couple families		297,496
			Single parent families		73,380
Cases of suspected child abuse notified, year to June 1993					8,496
children involved in notifications					7,070
cases of abuse/neglect substantiated					2,743
physical abuse	boys:	589	girls:	496	1,085
neglect	boys:	499	girls:	432	931
emotional abuse	boys:	196	girls:	245	441
sexual abuse	boys:	42	girls:	244	286
Domestic violence protection orders, year to June 1993			interim protection orders		4,735
			permanent protection orders		6,575
Children's court appearances for offences, year to June 1993			total		4,540
			committed for trial/sentence		155
			guilty - convicted		555
			guilty - not convicted		3,739
Children under court orders, as at 30 June 1993			care and control		452
			care and protection		2,557
			supervision		799
			protective supervision		302
			Queen's pleasure		7
Calls to Kids Help Line, Queensland (six months to November 1993) (approx)					20,000
Ten main reasons for calls from callers aged 10 to 14 (approx)					10,600
boys:			**girls:**		
family relationships		23.0%	family relationships		21.2%
physical abuse		10.6%	relationship with peers		15.2%
bullying		7.8%	physical abuse		6.5%
relationships with peers		6.7%	pregnancy		6.0%
leaving home/ homelessness		5.8%	developmental concerns		5.8%
			relationships with partners		5.8%
sexual activity		5.2%	bullying		4.2%
loneliness		5.1%	sexual activity		4.1%
drug use		4.4%	sexual abuse		3.8%
developmental concerns		4.0%	loneliness		2.9%
relationships with partners		3.1%			

Source: Queensland Department of Family Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Affairs (1992) and Kids Help Line (1993)

Schooling and young adolescents

The literature suggests some aspects of schooling itself appear to be significantly at variance with the developmental needs of young adolescents.

At a time of great variation in maturation rates of students, many schools follow year-level class groupings and curricula are based on an assumption of homogeneity among students. Daily timetables involving short periods with a battery of teachers cast young people adrift at a time when security and consistency in relationships are of paramount importance. Regimentation at a time of emerging independence may foment bitterness, resentment and a feeling that teachers are not really interested in young people as persons. An emphasis by schools on subject content and academic achievement at a time when students' preoccupation is with their broader personal development can produce stress and hostility amongst young adolescents.

A lack of collaboration by schools with family, community, health, social service and juvenile aid organisations 'compartmentalises' the life of young adolescents and fails to treat students as whole persons. The failure of schools to meet the needs of a number of young adolescents is reflected in the sad fact that many abused children and many first offenders are found amongst young adolescents who have 'dropped out' or who have been suspended or excluded from school.

Schools and school systems are, however, increasingly recognising the imperative to provide a supportive school environment for young adolescents through initiatives such as:

- *Learning communities* - developing smaller and more coherent groupings for young adolescents and their teachers, where people can get to know one another well and provision can be made for participative decision-making; focusing on interpersonal social skills through in-school and community based experiences including outdoor education, experience of work, community service, independence training, recreational education;
- *Curriculum design* - using the interests of young adolescents and their developmental tasks as the basis for coherent and relevant curriculum; providing for flexible and varied pathways for progress through the curriculum; facilitating mastery, promoting excellence;
- *Family and community involvement* - collaborating with parents/care-givers, communities and other agencies in developing individual education plans to provide for the educational and personal development needs of young adolescents; using the community as classroom;
- *Learning and teaching* - identifying and reinforcing learning and teaching practices which respond most effectively and sensitively to the developmental

needs of young adolescents; involving adolescents in ownership of programs and processes;

- *At risk students* (those at risk of not achieving success in their learning or personal development) - providing alternative learning environments to develop and maintain collaborative processes for identifying and supporting such young adolescents;
- *Personnel practices* - providing for a core of teachers to work with a group of students over an extended time; providing status and career pathways for teachers working primarily or exclusively with young adolescents - e.g. advanced skills teacher (early adolescence), group coordinator, assistant principal (junior secondary).

Wider community concern for more effective schooling for young adolescents is also leading to innovative collaborative responses by the community and schools including:

- *Schools as community centres* - community use of school facilities, adult learning, community groups;
- *Schools and the business community* - community-based experiences of work; alternative learning experiences;
- *Community involvement in schooling* - school councils, family and community participation in school and curriculum development planning;
- *Working with families* - helping families understand early adolescence; developing consistency in expectations, school-based family activities;
- *Working with companion professions* - collaborating with guidance and counselling professionals, social workers, family services, juvenile aid, doctors, psychologists and other professionals;
- *Alternative community learning environments* - shop fronts, houses, community colleges, links with TAFE.

Implications for teacher education

This brief analysis of the special characteristics and needs of young adolescents suggests that, irrespective of how schooling is currently organised and whether or not 'middle schooling' as an organisational strategy is adopted, preservice teacher education programs should provide opportunities for prospective teachers to prepare specifically for teaching young adolescents.

As suggested by NBEET and the Queensland Board of Teacher Registration, rather than focusing on levels of schooling (such as preschool, primary, secondary), programs might focus on the major developmental phases of *early childhood*,

childhood, *early adolescence* and *late adolescence/young adulthood*. Programs focusing on any one of these phases would be expected to provide a complementary understanding of the phases that precede and follow the phase which is the main focus of the course.

At the same time, as young adolescents are to be found in primary, secondary and special schools, it would seem desirable for *all* preservice programs for primary, secondary and special school teachers to provide: specific studies of early adolescence; teaching and learning studies appropriate to young adolescents; practicum experience of working with young adolescent students in and out of the classroom; and an understanding of working with other professions and agencies with an interest in the needs of young adolescents as persons.

Preservice programs preparing teachers for early adolescence need to be founded on valuing adolescence, viewing adolescence as a rich pathway to maturity rather than a problem period to be survived. They should provide an understanding of the widely varying life experiences of young adolescents; beliefs about and attitudes towards adolescents; reflection on student teachers' own experiences as adolescents; and an ability to teach across a number of subject areas and to develop integrated individual education plans.

The literature would suggest that courses should include extended practicum experiences of teaching young adolescents - and experiencing schooling from a young adolescent's point of view. They should also include extended field experience or internship with at least one relevant agency outside the school such as social work, Family Services, or Juvenile Aid Bureau (and perhaps a non-assessable 'service' internship as a volunteer with a local or overseas community agency). Case studies and profiles of young adolescents, through videotape case histories and through field experience with an individual or a group of young adolescents should also be provided, drawing together the contribution of all the agencies working with one individual or group.

There is clearly a need for targeted inservice education and other support for teachers who work with young adolescents, including such topics as the nature of early adolescence and implications for schooling, school and curriculum organisation, curriculum planning, effective learning and teaching, school climate, leadership, interpersonal skills, working with families and the community, and working with other professionals and service agencies. Training should be provided for supervisors who work with teachers of young adolescents or with preservice students preparing for teaching early adolescents.

Other desirable professional development offerings could include 'conversion' programs for teachers interested in working with young adolescents, and

cooperative professional development activities involving teaching staff and professionals from other agencies working with young adolescents and their families. Research and support networks for teachers and others working with young adolescents might be established, linking teachers with university researchers and other professionals.

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3. Responses to the Issues Paper

The Issues Paper, 'Preparing Teachers for Working with Young Adolescents', was widely circulated early in 1994 to all relevant interest groups in Queensland and to key interstate bodies in order to canvass opinion on the issues. Two hundred and thirteen responses were received to the Issues Paper from: teachers, schools and school support centres; Commonwealth and State Departments of Education; other teacher employers; other Government departments; Queensland and interstate universities; and community and welfare organisations. The responses were considered by the Working Party in the second half of 1994.

The overwhelming majority of responses expressed agreement with the general thrust of the paper and the need for a greater focus on the young adolescent age group. In most cases respondents agreed with or reiterated statements in the Issues Paper or elaborated on the information presented. Many proposed additional items to be included in particular sections, or made valuable suggestions for rewording the current material to ensure greater inclusivity or currency of information. Some replies were accompanied by information about organisations or initiatives of relevance to the area.

Several responses commended the Issues Paper for its comprehensive summary of the characteristics of early adolescence; and some people were particularly pleased to see recognition given to the needs of young adolescents in the upper primary school.

There was general agreement with the content in the Issues Paper in relation to the developmental needs of young adolescents, with many responses stating that teachers' preservice and inservice preparation should develop an awareness of these needs. Some comments were received concerning the need for collaboration between the school and the home, and for support for families.

Specific groups of young adolescents, including those from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, other ethnic minority, rural, and non-English speaking backgrounds and those with special educational needs, were identified as having additional, or different, needs.

The majority of responses supported the challenges of today's social context for young adolescents as presented in the Issues Paper. Many expanded on the points presented, often with specific examples. Many respondents drew connections between the social context described, the needs of young adolescents, and the implications for schooling and teacher education.

A large number of responses commented on the impressive list of community support agencies, with many suggesting that teachers, parents and young adolescents themselves need to be aware of such community groups and support structures. Some respondents saw a need for coordination of the various groups to avoid duplication of services and wastage of resources. Several people saw merit in some community groups operating from a school base.

Responses acknowledged the point made by the Issues Paper that there are aspects of schooling which may be at variance with the developmental needs of young adolescents. Most were highly in favour of the initiatives suggested in the paper for providing a supportive school environment for young adolescents. Some people suggested increased funding and provision of additional staff, particularly trained guidance officers, were prerequisites for the success of many initiatives.

The advantages of linking schools and other community structures were recognised by many respondents. Several people provided details of initiatives in this area underway at their school. There were seen to be considerable advantages in using schools as community centres, with many people commenting on the benefits of fully utilising available resources. The need for coordination among community groups was raised as an issue.

In relation to the section in the Issues Paper on teacher education, there was strong support for the proposal that preservice teacher education should provide opportunities for teachers to prepare specifically for teaching young adolescents. Respondents also generally agreed that the preservice preparation of all teachers should include components focusing on young adolescent education.

Many views were expressed about the necessary components of preservice teacher education courses which would prepare all teachers to teach young adolescents. Some of the areas which were seen as important for inclusion were: human relationships education, working with parents, ethics, teaching of literacy and numeracy skills, behaviour management, strategies for teaching special needs students, social justice issues, resource-based learning, building self-esteem, developing positive thinking skills, cross-cultural awareness training, teaching students from non-English-speaking backgrounds, greater understanding of the various areas of psychology such as social psychology, expertise in teaching practical activities (manual arts, home economics, creative and performing arts, physical education), 'excellence in teaching' components.

In view of the importance of communicating with young adolescents and their families, many respondents saw the development of communication skills as an essential component of preparation to teach young adolescents.

Several responses emphasised the importance of the practical experience component of teacher education.

The need for inservice education to support teachers working with young adolescents was endorsed. Many people considered inservice education in meeting the needs of young adolescents to be vital for all teachers, others were of the view that teachers should be selected for inservice education on the basis of their personal qualitities or desire to teach the age group.

Provision of a range of inservice courses was proposed, from university award courses to school-based activities. Distance education was considered to present a flexible, cost-effective option. Refresher courses or yearly updates were further proposals put forward.

4. The Conference

Sharing the Future: Preparing Teachers for Working with Young Adolescents

In the light of the strong support for the proposals put forward in the Issues Paper, the Working Party recommended that a conference for key representatives of relevant stakeholder groups be held. This would further examine the issues associated with the education of young adolescents and ways of addressing identified needs in schools, education systems, and teacher education. The Board of Teacher Registration, jointly with the Department of Education, the Queensland Catholic Education Commission, and the Association of Independent Schools of Queensland, convened a conference called 'Sharing the Future: Preparing Teachers for Working with Young Adolescents', on 23-25 August 1995 at Coolangatta.

This was a working conference and consisted of input from a range of speakers and several stages of workshop discussion to arrive at outcomes which represented the expertise of those involved.

The aims of the conference were:

- to bring together a very wide range of partners with a vested interest in young adolescent education;
- to develop a shared vision for the future education of young adolescents;
- to explore implications of this vision for teacher preparation;
- to develop recommendations concerning preservice and inservice teacher education in order to prepare teachers more able to meet the needs of young adolescents today and in the future.

The conference was attended by approximately 100 representatives of teachers, school administrators, teacher education institutions, teacher employing authorities, curriculum authorities, professional associations, teacher unions, parent bodies, other Queensland government departments, and community and welfare organisations.

The conference commenced on the evening of Wednesday, 23 August, with the conference dinner and a drama presentation by Nerang State High School Drama students portraying young adolescents' perspectives on education. The conference was opened with a brief address by Mr David Hamill, Queensland Minister for Education, who outlined recent government initiatives aimed to support teachers in their work. He emphasised the important role of schools in society today, and the

need to ensure teachers are able to engage students in relevant, meaningful learning.

The second day of the conference began with a presentation by a panel of three speakers. Mr Jim Cumming, Executive Officer of the Australian Curriculum Studies Association, spoke about student alienation and some of the outcomes of a current research project in the area.

Mr Dimitri Glianos, Principal of Buranda Senior Special School, and Ms Julie Brown, Principal of Mount Gravatt State High School, spoke from the perspective of teachers working with young adolescents about some of the issues, and how schooling can meet the needs of young adolescents.

The second session of day two comprised poster presentations by schools and community groups to demonstrate some of the innovative practices currently in place to meet the needs of young adolescents[1]. The remainder of the second day was devoted to workshop group discussion in which participants developed a shared understanding or vision of the ideal schooling for young adolescents, and the implications of this for teachers.

The third and final day of the conference commenced with a forum where representatives of teacher employers, teacher unions, and teacher education institutions presented their perspectives on the education of young adolescents and responded to questions from participants.

In the workshop discussion which followed, participants considered implications - for teacher education, for schools, and for education systems - of the vision of the ideal schooling for young adolescents. Group recommendations were presented in the final plenary session.

[1] For information about current good practice in schools, reference may be made to sources such as the School Practices and Information Register (SPIR) database on the Information Access Network of the Queensland Department of Education.

III. OUTCOMES

1. The Vision

Many of the issues concerning schooling for young adolescents which were raised in the Board's 1994 Issues Paper, 'Preparing Teachers for Working with Young Adolescents', were discussed again at the conference in August 1995 titled 'Sharing the Future: Preparing Teachers for Working with Young Adolescents'. What emerged from the project as a whole was a vision for the future schooling of young adolescents, and recommendations for action to implement this. The vision is described in the following paragraphs.

The school of the future will be **a place where students want to be**, not one they are forced to attend. It will provide support and a focus for these young people. It will be a school where teachers care more about students than about structures, subjects or assessment. The school will not stand in isolation but will be the hub of the community - interacting with individuals and agencies outside the school.

Above all, **the school will be flexible** - and able to trial and implement innovative approaches to teaching, curriculum, and leadership and school organisation. Such innovative practices will not be limited to either primary or secondary levels, but will span the interface to overcome problems of transition and adjustment.

Students will find school an interesting, challenging place. They will also view the school as a safe anchor in a world of change. They will be engaged in their learning and will have the opportunity to experience success. Students will be given greater control over and responsibility for their learning. Their schooling will equip students for today's society and workplace.

Teachers and students in this school will be learners together; they will engage in **negotiating** a curriculum that is worthwhile, exciting, and relevant to young adolescents' needs, interests, and future. The whole school community (students, staff, parents, and the wider community) will be involved in democratic, collaborative planning and decision-making.

Teachers will be caring and committed to teaching this age group. They will have a depth of knowledge in some subjects but will be able to integrate curriculum areas and impart a love of learning. They will be able to draw on a range of strategies and approaches to adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of all students. Teachers will have a sound understanding of the young people they teach and be able to implement a holistic approach to education. Young adolescents especially

need high-quality teaching from teachers whose teacher preparation has equipped them to meet the developmental needs of young adolescents.

Schools will be adequately and flexibly resourced, including provision for reduced student-teacher ratios in the middle years of schooling. Teachers will be attracted to, and encouraged to remain in, the middle schooling area by the introduction of new career paths within middle schooling which provide greater recognition of the importance of teaching in this area.

To implement the vision much depends on the teacher, therefore it is vital that teacher preparation is compatible with this vision. There will need to be strong links between universities, schools, and education systems and the wider community in developing teacher education programs. Teacher education will provide studies in early adolescence and experience in teaching this age group. Teachers will be equipped to work effectively in the middle school area, based on an understanding of young adolescents and the world in which they live. Skills in such areas as communication, negotiation, and cooperative teaching and learning will be developed.

To implement the vision for the schooling of young adolescents requires a joint responsibility and a strong commitment of all key players: the universities, the schools, the teacher education systems, and other agencies. Universities will prepare teachers to implement the vision; schools will accept the challenge to change and be supported and resourced for this by the education systems. The education systems will also provide employment and career opportunities specifically for teachers of young adolescents. Schools will draw on other community and government agencies in order to provide a holistic approach to meeting the needs of young adolescents.

The recommendations which follow are directed to teacher education: however, action in one area will not succeed except in conjunction with implementation of changes in other sectors, therefore implications for schools, education systems, and curriculum have also been included.

It is essential that we work together to bring the vision to reality.

2. Implications for Schools

(a) A supportive school culture

A school's culture or ethos determines the effectiveness of the school. A culture does not emerge in isolation. It is developed through a commitment by all stakeholders to work together to achieve agreed outcomes which reflect the values of the school community.

- All schools should work towards developing a supportive school culture and articulate clear goals for achieving this.
- A supportive school culture should value and include all its students.
- Schools should be committed to tolerance, supportive risk-taking, care, safety, responsibility, and respect.
- The transition between primary and secondary schools should become a process that is anticipated and enjoyed by all students.
- Teachers should understand the idiosyncratic traits of young adolescents (e.g. sense of living for the present, need for autonomy and independence, and importance of the peer group); they should see themselves as facilitators of learning; they should model empowerment and a love of learning; and they should provide meaningful and practical learning experiences.

(b) High quality, effective pedagogy

- Pedagogical practices within a school should reflect a commitment to developing an environment in which teachers and students are learning, growing, and developing.
- Learning and teaching practices should respond effectively and sensitively to the developmental needs of young adolescents and involve students in the planning and development of programs and processes.
- Pedagogical practices should reflect an understanding of the variety of ways students think and learn.
- Pedagogical practices should be constantly reviewed by all stakeholders to maintain high quality.

- Teacher professionalism should be maintained and enhanced by appropriate professional development and the development of communication networks among groups of teachers.

- Good practice should be supported and promoted through exchange of ideas and open communication among individual teachers.

- Schools should ensure they maintain a database of examples of good practice which is relevant to their needs and appropriate for their community.

- The engagement of an effective peer-mentoring program for teachers should be explored as a means of encouraging quality pedagogy.

(c) Flexibility in school management structures

Schools should be prepared to move from traditional management procedures in order to provide students with access to the best of educational opportunities.

Some possible strategies include:

effective use of information technology, including linking with other schools;
specialisation by some schools in particular subject areas, such specialisation being accessible to students in nearby schools;
variation in the length of the school day (and week);
true vertical timetabling that allows all students to undertake subjects at the most appropriate level;
grouping of subjects in a way which enables secondary teachers to take particular classes for more than one subject ... perhaps for three or four;
provision of time for teachers to undertake 'pastoral care' programs and activities;
learning sites beyond the usual school boundaries (community organisations, business, etc);
access by students to other providers (TAFE, universities, etc);
use of a team approach (multidisciplinary/interagency school-based support teams)

(d) Collaborative decision-making

School administrators should adopt collaborative decision-making strategies which recognise the valuable contribution all school community members (students, staff, parents, and others) can make to the overall effectiveness of the school.

(e) A negotiated curriculum

Young adolescents, like all students in schools, need to be assured that the curriculum provides the scope to develop their skills and prior knowledge and enhance their ability to function effectively in society. They need to have the confidence that teachers will facilitate the process to enable them to maximise opportunities at every level. Varied and flexible pathways should be provided for progress through the curriculum.

School implementation of curricula should allow teachers and students to develop those relationships which lead to the development of the total person. Together they should explore the learning and teaching phenomenon culminating in a process marked by purpose and integrity.

Students in the early adolescent range are prime targets for teachers to demonstrate the versatility of their profession. By becoming involved in non-classroom activities, by integrating outdoor activities with serious content, by taking an interdisciplinary approach, teachers can ensure that this group of students will achieve to their potential. Key learning areas must not be ignored, simply enriched by flexible curriculum construction ensuring that students access the range of offerings available to them within the school.

This general understanding of appropriate curricula for young adolescents is developed further in the section below.

3. Implications for Curriculum

- The principle which characterises the school curriculum should be a negotiated and collaborative process with students themselves as active learners and participants, with a focus on collaborative teaching practice.

- Realistic attempts should be made to understand the world of young adolescents, and to take opportunities to explore new ways of framing the curriculum through different pathways and innovative practice, taking cognisance of global, interdisciplinary approaches and incorporating early adolescent world views.

- Systems and schools should encourage and support a range of different options in curriculum designs and reconceptualise traditional subject offerings as considered necessary.

- Curriculum should provide for enjoyable and meaningful education and social experiences that acknowledge the value of the 'adolescent present'.

- Technical and educational contexts of curriculum should be located firmly within wider life contexts of learners.

- There should be a commitment to a curriculum which develops social responsibility, and recognises individual rights and responsibilities.

- The curriculum should make explicit the connectedness of subject or learning domains.

- The curriculum should recognise the needs of young adolescents to express themselves in a variety of modes and settings, including, for some, frequent periods of physical activity, and withdrawal and reflection time for others. This might include the provision of learning contexts other than the classroom and include a range of off-campus activities.

- Assessment, evaluation and reporting of student achievement should comprise a range of types for the range of adolescent learners. The formative nature of assessment should be emphasised.

- The curriculum offered by schools should provide ample opportunities for young adolescents to take risks and extend themselves in a supportive, caring environment. The support structures should be such that they assist students to reflect on their own thinking, learning and risk-taking so that

they can confidently take on independent, individual life roles, identity and values positions.

- Curriculum content, organisation and teaching strategies should proceed from and make explicit the ethic of care which underpins the educational and social endeavour of the school.

- The curriculum organisation in schools should ensure that young adolescents are provided with opportunities for the development and consolidation of effective and productive team and group skills, in a variety of school-based, work-related and social contexts. Students should also be provided with opportunities for individual achievement in contexts which are realistic and supportive.

- An expert working party should develop a futures perspective to inform the design and implementation of curricula at school and in teacher development programs.

- Curriculum organisation should seek to minimise the tensions and difficulties sometimes caused at the interface of primary and secondary schooling, aiming for genuine consistency and linkage of learnings.

- Research should be integral to curriculum development. This research should include a range of types and levels from school-based action research to research at the systemic level.

- Systems and schools, as critically responsive organisations, should design processes that can effectively evaluate the outcomes of design and delivery processes in curricula in terms of the developmental needs of young adolescents.

4. Implications for Systems

All education systems must formally recognise and address the issues affecting the learning, work, and social potential of young adolescents. Schools must be supported to ensure they meet the diverse needs of students in this age range. Education systems can undertake affirmative action in the area of early adolescent education through:

1. Forging links

- linking across Ministerial portfolios to develop an integrated approach at government level to enable schools/regions to establish productive local interagency support with, for example, Family Services, Education, Police, and Health;
- liaising with universities to ensure provision of appropriate preservice and inservice teacher education programs;
- liaising effectively with the Board of Senior Secondary School Studies and the Queensland School Curriculum Office;
- liaising with business organisations to inform learning experiences for young adolescents.

2. Supporting and enhancing teacher professionalism in this age range

- initiating teacher professional development in early adolescent education and providing time for effective skills enhancement of both upper primary and lower secondary teachers;
- encouraging teacher-initiated and -implemented professional development, e.g. action research, networking;
- supporting innovativeness, creativity;
- encouraging teachers to develop strategies in negotiating curriculum, problem-solving, group facilitation, communication and conflict resolution;
- supporting teacher placement in other industries;
- organising full-time professional redevelopment or training opportunities.

3. Restructuring schooling in the middle years

- exploring the regulatory framework to make 'enabling' changes;
- placing limits on school size in this age range (e.g. developing sub-schools);
- reducing the average number of students per teacher;
- supporting team approaches ('family' groups) for students and staff;

- supporting innovative personnel practices such as a group of teachers working with young adolescents over an extended time.

4. Raising the status of teaching in the middle school years

- providing creative career paths and positions in areas that recognise the importance of learning and being actively involved in young adolescent education, e.g. 'Advanced Skills Teacher (Young Adolescents)', 'Assistant Principal (Junior School)'.
- employing and rewarding teachers who are successful and enjoy teaching in this area.

5. Supporting innovation in curriculum content and delivery, such as:

- alternative learning environments
- teaching across Key Learning Areas;
- negotiated curriculum.

6. Improving public understanding by, for example:

- publicising examples of 'good practice' in schooling for this age group;
- informing the community of the challenges of early adolescent education.

7. Increasing resourcing by:

- providing needs-based resourcing (human, material, financial) to schools to support initiatives listed above; resourcing of this area should be at least comparable to that provided for the upper secondary years of schooling;
- organising appropriate budgets to support relevant rethinking/planning/ implementation in the area.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TEACHER EDUCATION

Preservice Programs

(a) Preservice teacher education programs should be developed which enable prospective teachers to prepare specifically for the teacher's role in young adolescent education. These teachers might work in the upper primary and/or lower secondary levels of schooling. Such programs, while focusing on early adolescence, would provide some understanding of developmental stages that precede and follow this stage.

Preservice programs preparing teachers specifically for teaching young adolescents need to provide:

- specific studies of early adolescence taking in all its aspects (e.g. cultural, social, psychological, physical, intellectual, spiritual, emotional) but emphasising a holistic approach;
- learning and teaching studies appropriate to young adolescents, e.g. studies which develop skills in communication, group facilitation, counselling, collaborative planning, and team work; studies of a variety of models for curriculum including negotiated, interdisciplinary approaches and orientations which are not solely subject-centred;
- extended practical experiences of teaching and working with young adolescents and learning about schooling from a young adolescent's point of view; such experiences should occur in both primary and secondary schools, and, where possible, in future-oriented schools that are committed to providing the kind of schooling for young adolescents envisioned in the preceding sections of this report;
- practicum experience of working with other professions and agencies with an interest in the needs of young adolescents, including an extended field experience with at least one relevant agency outside the school such as those in the social work, family services, or juvenile aid areas;
- case studies and profiles of young adolescents, through videotaped case histories and through field experience with an individual or a group of young adolescents, including out-of-classroom experiences which facilitate the development of an understanding of the total life context of such young people (e.g. including youth culture and language).

Programs need to promote:

- a valuing of adolescence, seeing it as a rich pathway to maturity rather than a problem period to be survived;
- an understanding of the widely varying life experiences of young adolescents;
- appropriate beliefs about and attitudes towards adolescents; reflection on student teachers' own experiences as adolescents;
- the ability to teach across a range of learning areas and to develop integrated individual education plans as well as maintaining in-depth studies in one or more areas;
- an understanding of working with other professions and agencies with an interest in the needs of young adolescents.

(b) As young adolescents are to be found in primary, secondary, and special schools, and all teachers in such schools might expect to work with young adolescents at some time in their careers, all preservice programs for primary, secondary and special school teachers should provide:

- specific studies of early adolescence;
- teaching and learning studies appropriate to young adolescents;
- practicum experience of working with young adolescent students in and out of the classroom;
- an understanding of working with other professions and agencies with an interest in the needs of young adolescents.

Inservice Programs

(a) Specific inservice education should be provided for teachers who currently work with young adolescents. This should include topics such as the nature of early adolescence and implications for matters such as: school and curriculum organisation, curriculum planning, effective learning and teaching (including, for example, skills in behaviour management, collaborative learning, literacy teaching, recognition of learning difficulties and disabilities), school culture, leadership, interpersonal skills (e.g. skills in negotiation and mediation, counselling, and in dealing with issues such as bullying and harassment), human relationships education, working with families and the community, working with other professionals and service agencies, vocational/career awareness.

A range of such inservice courses, from university award courses to school-based activities, should be available.

(b) Specific inservice programs should be available for teachers who are interested in changing to working with young adolescents and who are judged on the basis of their personal qualities to be suitable for such work.

(c) Cooperative professional development opportunities should be available involving teaching staff and professionals from other agencies working with young adolescents and their families.

(d) Research and support networks should be provided for teachers and others working with young adolescents; these networks should link teachers with university researchers and other professionals.

(e) Training should be available for supervisors who work with teachers of young adolescents or with preservice students preparing for teaching young adolescents.

Appendix 1

WORKING PARTY ON THE PREPARATION OF TEACHERS FOR THE EDUCATION OF YOUNG ADOLESCENTS

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Appendix 3

SPONSORS

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